Camping and Outdoor Readiness

Not sure where to begin when it comes to introducing your troop to the outdoors? Read through this packet to help you decide what kind of outdoor adventure your troop is ready for and find resources to help make your outdoor adventure a success. Click any of the titles in the Table of Contents to be taken to that section of the document.

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Girl Scouts Nation’s Capital Camps

Girl Scouts Nation’s Capital has eight camp properties, 6 of which are inside our council borders, and 2 (Camp May Flather and Camp Coles Trip) that are outside of our council borders. Troops use camp properties for day events, troop meetings, overnights, and more. All eight camps are available in the fall and spring for troop camping. Our camps are even available for winter camping with heated lodges open for troop use. During the summer, Camps Brighton Woods and Crowell host day camps and evening camps, and Camps Coles Trip, May Flather, Potomac Woods, and Winona host sleepaway camps. Day use at all camps Sunday through Thursday is free (reservation required).

Ways to Camp at Girl Scout Camps

Troops can choose to stay overnight in lodges, glen shelters, or platform tents. Camp Crowell hosts Adirondack shelters, and Camp White Rock even has tree houses! Primitive camping sites are also available for tent camping use, and a few camps host primitive hammocking units (hammocks included). Lodges are heated buildings, there’s typically a kitchen, large meeting room, small meeting rooms, and indoor bathrooms with flushing toilets. Smaller lodges may just have one room and outdoor bathrooms. Glen shelters are structures with a wooden floor, four walls, door, and a roof. Platform tents include a wooden platform and tent covering. Glen shelters, platform tents, Adirondack shelters, and tree houses have latrines or bathrooms nearby and do not have heat or air conditioning. To see pictures of the different types of units, visit http://bit.ly/GSCNCCampPhotos

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Camping and Outdoor Readiness

Troop Meetings at Camp
Holding a troop meeting at camp is a great way to become familiar with the outdoors and get comfortable being in nature. You can make a free day use site reservation just for your troop to use! Here are some things you could do as a part of your troop meeting at camp:

- Hike one of the trails
- Play outdoor games
- Complete activities from Girl Scout outdoor badges
- Enjoy the fresh air and being outdoors
- Complete a service project for camp (contact the camp caretaker first)
- Complete Explore Camp patch activities focused on outdoor skills
- Do some outdoor cooking over a campfire. A Cookout/Campout certified adult is needed to supervise all outdoor cooking.
- Try out a high adventure activity like archery, slingshots, tomahawks, canoeing, kayaking, or even a high or low ropes course! A trained high adventure facilitator and a separate reservation are required to use high adventure areas.

Camps & Offices Map

Offices/Satellite Offices
1. Main Office
2. Girl Scout Archives and History Program Center
3. Kingstowne Office
4. Martinsburg Office
5. Brandywine Office
6. Manassas Office
7. Germantown Office
8. Equipment Center
9. Girl Scout Archives Center Winchester, VA

Association

Council Campsites
1. Camp Aquasco
2. Camp Brighton Woods
3. Camp Coles Trip
4. Camp Crowell
5. Camp May Flather
6. Camp Potomac Woods
7. Camp Winona
8. Camp White Rock
## GSUSA Troop Outdoor Readiness Assessment

Girl Scouts of the USA created this assessment to help you match the characteristics of most of the girls in your troop with appropriate outdoor activities. Based on the ability of most of the girls in your troop, choose the one best description in each row from either Column One, Column Two, or Column Three. Give yourself:

- One (1) point for each item circled in Column One
- Two (2) points for each item circled in Column Two
- Three (3) points for each item circle in Column Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Column One</th>
<th>Column Two</th>
<th>Column Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 – Motor Skill Ability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most girls in the troop...</td>
<td>run, jump, and draw</td>
<td>run while bouncing a ball</td>
<td>draw in detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>need lots of help</td>
<td>work independently</td>
<td>proceed with little or no adult assistance once given directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 – Attention Span</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most girls in the troop...</td>
<td>lose interest after 5-10 minutes</td>
<td>want to discover things for themselves</td>
<td>have increased ability to concentrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>get frustrated easily</td>
<td>are active, noisy, restless,</td>
<td>giggle a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>show great imagination</td>
<td>show initiative</td>
<td>see hidden meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 – Ability to Work with Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most girls in the troop...</td>
<td>have emotional outbursts</td>
<td>are sensitive of criticism</td>
<td>cry when angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are friendly</td>
<td>value approval of peers</td>
<td>often hurt feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>like to be first and win</td>
<td>are conscious of others</td>
<td>develop cliques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have thoughts largely centered on self</td>
<td>believe it’s vital to belong and be loyal</td>
<td>find peer acceptance important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>show poor group spirit</td>
<td>like organized games and relate to peers according to rules</td>
<td>seek ideals and meaning to life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 – Behavioral Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most girls in the troop...</td>
<td>move around or fidget a lot</td>
<td>are energetic</td>
<td>are unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tire and cry easily</td>
<td>are always hungry</td>
<td>often crave food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are curious and daring</td>
<td>are curious and creative</td>
<td>are adventurous and thrill-seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thrive on adult approval</td>
<td>seek independence</td>
<td>want to be trusted with responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rely on adults for directions</td>
<td>are not as attached to adults</td>
<td>show strong identification with an admired adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>need definite directions</td>
<td>look to adults to facilitate</td>
<td>want to be accepted by adults as thinking and self-reliant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Points:**

**Grand Total of all 3 columns:**

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Camping and Outdoor Readiness

GSUSA Troop Outdoor Readiness Assessment Scoring
Use the number of points from the assessment to indicate the best approach to outdoor activities for your troop. Some of these descriptions include mentions to pre-planned camping opportunities such as sleepaway camp or core camps. More information on pre-planned camping opportunities can be found on page 7 of this document.

16 to 20 points
The girls in your troop are ready for outdoor programs during the day. They will enjoy high energy games without detailed directions. They will like climbing and crawling using large muscles and love to play. It may be difficult to keep them focused on any one thing for too long due to their short attention span. They will need lots of different things to do and their total participation time may be limited to 4-5 hours before they grow tired and lose interest.

For this troop, we suggest short day outings, like to a local park or outdoor nature area where the girls can explore, play actively, and get more comfortable being outdoors.

20 to 30 points
The girls in your troop are ready to spend longer days doing outdoor programs, and they are ready for day or evening camp! They like the large muscle activities mentioned above and although their attention span is getting longer, it is still difficult for them to focus on one thing for any length of time. Day long participation in an outdoor program is still recommended.

For this troop, we recommend day outings at one of our eight camps (Sun-Thurs day use is free!), or at a local park. Check with your local service unit to find outdoor day events happening near you that are put on by teen troops. Girls can attend day or evening camp during the summer and may also be interested in completing activities from the main patch in the Explore Camp Patch Program.

30 to 36 points
The girls in your troop are ready for an overnight in a heated building, such as a lodge at camp, or attending a core camp. Being in a heated lodge together will help the girls feel more comfortable in a home-like atmosphere and look forward to being outdoors to hike, listen to night sounds, have a campfire, and explore the woods. See the last page in this document for a checklist on how to prepare for an overnight camping trip.

Girls will want the adults to assist them in cooking, cleaning, but not have the adults do it for them. The girls define their self-worth by achievements, so it is important to let the girls do the planning and carry out the activities. A great way to make this happen is by having the girls create a kaper chart before the camping trip, so the camp kapers (chores) are evenly divided and each girl gets a chance to do each kaper. These girls are developing their attention spans and ability to focus on completing a task. Quite often they want to discover something for themselves but can get frustrated easily and need a little encouragement. They are developing fine motor skills and often like to master a physical activity through practice, repetition, and variation of movement. As they get older, they like more complex challenges. Being fair is important, as is forming close friendships.

For this troop, we recommend an overnight in one of our heated lodges at camp, with a progression to glen shelters or platform tents and/or attending a core camp for the weekend. Girls may also be ready for a short 3-day overnight experience at one of our sleepaway camps or attending an overnight at day or evening camp. Girls will be ready to complete the activities in the individual camp patches of the Explore Camp Patch program during your camping trip.

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Camping and Outdoor Readiness

GSUSA Troop Outdoor Readiness Assessment Scoring (continued)

36-44 points
The girls in your troop are ready to camp in platform tents or glen shelters and attend a full week of sleepaway camp. They are gaining independence and looking for complex challenges, and like structure but may need help understanding why. Peer groups and same-gender friendships are important as are adult encouragement and recognition. Girls are becoming self-conscious about their abilities, but they will get the most out of activities that they help plan.

For this troop, we recommend camping for a full weekend in a glen shelter or platform tent unit at one of our eight camps. Girls may want to challenge themselves by completing the Challenge Mode activities in the Explore Camp Patch Program. They will still enjoy day and evening camp and will likely be ready to attend a full week of sleepaway camp too.

44-48 points
The girls in your troop are entering their teens and are seeking a comfortable social group. The girls are anxious for independence and getting ahead in life but fear failure. Quite often there is a strong identification with an admired adult. The girls look for positive social interaction with adults and peers, meaningful participation, and opportunities for self-definition. They also like structure and clear limits, but thrive on physical activity and creative expression. They are capable of planning their camping trips: meal planning and preparation, as well as most of their outdoor activities.

For this troop, we recommend weekend or extended camping trips following a theme (earning a badge or Journey) or with extensive physical activity (trail maintenance, extended hike, high adventure), or a variety of activities for small groups to choose from. These girls may also be interested in pursuing leadership opportunities at day and evening camp, such as becoming an aide-in-training or trying out high adventure focused sleepaway camp opportunities. The girls may also enjoy putting on outdoor skills day events for younger Girl Scouts or other programs in which they can share their outdoor expertise with others.

**Explore Camp Patch Program**
Girl Scouts completing this patch program (newly created in 2019-2020) will hone their eight basic outdoor skills by completing activities like learning how to build a campfire, making a sit-upon, practicing knife safety, playing flashlight tag, having a bedroll relay race, and much more! No special training or previous outdoor experience is needed to deliver the activities in the main patch, and a supply list, detailed instructions, and discussion questions for each activity are included in the patch requirements. Main patch activities can also be delivered in a virtual format, thanks to our amazing volunteer outdoor educators! You can access PowerPoint presentations for main patch activities by visiting the course titled “Explore Camp Main Patch Live Webinar” on gsLearn.

After earning the main patch, Girl Scouts can earn the other eight patches in this program, each of which focus on one of the eight Nation’s Capital camp properties. Camp patch activities are intended to be completed at camp and are great to do during a troop meeting at camp, a day event, or an overnight camping trip. Visit gscnc.org/explorecamp for more information and to download patch requirements.

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Pre-Planned Camping Opportunities

Sleepaway Camp
Girl Scouts Nation's Capital offers sleepaway camp opportunities for Girl Scouts at Camp Potomac Woods, Camp Winona, Camp Coles Trip, and Camp May Flather during the summer. For more information, visit gscnc.org/sleepawaycamp.

Day & Evening Camps
Girl Scouts Nation's Capital supports volunteer-run day camps and volunteer-run evening camps during the summer. For more information, visit gscnc.org/dayandeveningcamp.

Core Camps & High Adventure Activity Days
Girl Scouts Nation's Capital holds spring and fall Core Camps at our camp properties. Core Camps are fun weekends at camp designed and organized by volunteers and teen troops. Core Camps give troops the opportunity to go camping and not worry about what activities to do when they get there! High Adventure Activity Days are day events for girls to try out a high adventure activity - archery, tomahawks, slingshots, kayaking, or canoeing. High adventure facilitators are provided, no need to search for a certified instructor.

Visit our events page to see a schedule of core camps and activity days: http://www.gscnc.org/en/event/events-list.html?q=core+camp. Some recently offered core camps are:
- **Mother and Daughter Core Camp** is an introductory Mom & Me camping event at Camp Potomac Woods for Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies. It often takes place on Mother’s Day weekend of every spring.
- **Aquasco Teen Encampment** is a primitive camping event at Camp Aquasco for Girl Scout Cadettes and up that often takes place every fall and every spring.
- **Adventure Core Camps** at Camp May Flather for Girl Scout Juniors and up often take place every fall and every spring. You register for a camp focused on one high adventure activity: archery, backpacking, challenge course, or climbing.

Camping and Outdoors Resources

Camping FAQs
Visit https://bit.ly/GSCNCCampFAQ for frequently asked questions about camping at Nation's Capital camps. This document is periodically updated.

Photos of Camps

Other Helpful Online Resources
- Camping in Girl Scouts Nation’s Capital: gscnc.org/camp
- Volunteer Essentials: gscnc.org/en/for-volunteers/Publications.html
- Camping at Home: gscnc.org/en/council/about-us/girl-scouts-at-home.html#Camping
- GSUSA Outdoor Tutorial Videos (campsite setup, outdoor cooking, fire building, etc.): vimeo.com/showcase/3980822

Camping Reservation Links
To see dates when camps are unavailable for reservations, visit https://bit.ly/CampAvailability. For questions about campsite reservation, contact customercare@gscnc.org or call 202-237-1670.
- **Camping Equipment Rental**: http://gscnc.doubleknot.com/facilitysearch/3246
- **Campsite Reservations**: https://www.gscnc.org/en/camp/troop-camping/AboutOurCamps.html
## Camping Preparedness Checklist

Is your troop ready for an overnight camping experience? Complete the checklist below to find out!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADULTS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>TROOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ☐ One [Cookout/Campout](#) trained adult  
☐ One [First Aid/CPR/AED](#) trained adult  
☐ Enough adults to cover the girl to adult camping ratios in [Volunteer Essentials](#)  
☐ Have reserved a campsite that will accommodate all adults and girls (capacity, sleeping area for men, etc.)  
☐ Have helped the girls plan, practice, and prepare for the camping trip  
☐ Prepared to sleep in a tent, glen shelter, or part of the lodge with other adults only  
☐ Made transportation arrangements  
☐ Read through the reservation confirmation sent from [noreply@doubleknot.com](mailto:noreply@doubleknot.com)  
- Know the gate code and how to open the lock on the gate at camp  
- Have looked over the map and know how to get to the reserved unit  
- Know what amenities are available at the reserved unit and what may not be available due to the season (i.e. winter camping)  
☐ Reached out to the Camping Department with any questions  
☐ Want to go camping!  
| ☐ Aware of and prepared to deal with darkness, being outside at night, insects and small creatures  
☐ Can carry and have packed their own equipment  
☐ Know their camp kapers  
☐ Have the skills and knowledge to use kitchen and camp tools  
☐ Know how to wash dishes and other camp skills  
☐ Have participated in outdoor day-only experiences, such as cooking outdoors and hiking/walking outside  
☐ Have experienced or are prepared to experience a night away from home and family  
☐ Prepared to sleep in a tent, glen shelter, or part of the lodge with other girls and no adults (adults close by)  
☐ Want to go camping!  
| ☐ Planned and practiced camping skills together, such as dishwashing, outdoor cooking, firebuilding, packing camping equipment, using kitchen and camp tools  
☐ Have created a kaper chart and divided up the kapers  
☐ Have divided up the sleeping areas so that girls and adults are not sleeping in the same glen shelter, tent, or part of the lodge. Adults should still be close by, but in a separate area from girls  
☐ Planned emergency procedures/drills for camping trip  
☐ Want to go camping!  

## Being Prepared

The Girl Scout Motto is “be prepared”, and when planning a camping trip or outdoor adventure, planning for the unexpected will help you be as prepared as possible for camp. Take some time to think about your “what ifs”.

- **What if it rains all weekend?** Do you have activities? Rain gear? If cooking outside only, how will you get a fire going and keep it going?
- **What if there is an accident?** Do you have health forms for all girls and health forms or waivers for adults? What about a fully stocked first aid kit? Where will your first aid kit be located? Do you have emergency contact info for everyone, not just girls?
- **What if the girls become frightened of the dark?** Do you have flashlights? Do your girls know what kind of nighttime noises to expect? Are they prepared for how dark it can get at camp?
- **What if it’s dark when you arrive?** Will you be able to find your unit? Will you need to set up tents in the dark?
- **What if there’s no cell phone reception?** Do you have a battery-powered weather radio to warn you of any possible bad weather? If staying at a Nation’s Capital camp, do you know the code and number for the emergency phone?

- Updated 9/2020
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